Spaces of Capital/Spaces of Labor (and Everything In-between):

Borders in *Upside Down*

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Contents

Introduction

Some years ago, *A Day Without a Mexican* (Sergio Arau, 2004) fantasized with the idea of all Mexican migrants disappearing from the United States for one day. The film depicts the mess that results from the absence of Mexicans in the USA: almost nothing works. One year and ten months after the US release of this film, migrants in the United States, mostly from Latin America, organized the 'Great American Boycott' strike on May 1, 2006. Migrants did not attend schools, work, or buy anything in an attempt to draw attention to their presence and demand equal rights. *A Day without a Mexican* presents an unrealistic situation—Mexicans will not disappear from one day to the next—, yet it captures the times' preoccupations accurately. Movies are mirrors of the social affairs and concerns of their time. Science fiction, which often portrays imaginary and futuristic worlds, draws on the present environment to speculate on the future. Recently, some science fiction films have made this premise evident by depicting futuristic dystopian worlds where borders organize space, people, and social relations. Despite the abundance of social discourses on globalization and extensive interconnectedness, some films evince the obvious: that borders and boundaries still structure contemporary societies. *In Time* (Andrew Niccol, 2011), *Upside Down* (Juan Solanas, 2012), the new version of *Total Recall* (Len Wiseman, 2012), and *Elysium* (Neill Blomkamp, 2013), for example, imagine near-future planets where borders separate wealthy fortresses from working-class areas that the elites exploit.

In Time depicts a world where time is the new currency and cities are divided in 'time (money) zones.' *Upside Down* presents a rich and a poor planet (Up Top and Down Below respectively) connected by a skyscraper. This building is the only normalized point of connection between both planets. The tower belongs to Transworld, a company from Up Top that exploits

the resources from Down Below. *Total Recall* (2012) shows the attempts of the fictional United Federation of Britain government to take over the Colony, located in present-day Australia, through a tunnel shuttle built through the Earth. Neill Blomkamp's *Elysium* imagines life in the year 2154, when the affluent elites live in a spaceship that no-one else is allowed access to. On the contrary, the poor live in an over-populated Earth that is running short of natural resources and whose infrastructures have deteriorated to a point that Earth looks like a post-apocalyptic scene. On Earth, *Elysium* focuses on Los Angeles, which is populated by diverse ethnicities among which Latinos stand out. *In Time, Upside Down,* and *Total Recall* (2012) coincide in their celebration of cross-border (romantic) relationships. According to Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim and Ulrich Beck, transnational love is (and will be) a phenomenon on the rise in contemporary and future societies (2011: 252-258). *Upside Down* and *Elysium* stand out from *In Time* and *Total Recall* (2012) in their capacity to create complex worlds made out of multiple details that call for close visual analysis. This thesis focuses on Juan Solanas' film because of its particularly complex articulation of an alternative world and its powerful combination with the phenomenon of transnational love. In addition, *Upside Down*, unlike any of the other three films, is the outcome of a transnational production project. Consequently, my analysis of *Upside Down* revolves around the science fiction film genre, borders, and transnational interactions and relationships. This framework will eventually draw attention to the separation between wealthy and poor spaces in *Upside Down*, the inevitability of spontaneous human connections in borderlands, and the centrality of transnational love in the film and its potential in contemporary societies.

The influence of borders in human lives is a topical subject nowadays. The media often report on the stories of refugees and border-crossers and people regularly organize demonstrations in local communities and cities to denounce the harsh life conditions of migrants. In the academic domain, the study of borders was originally a geographical matter. In order to provide a brief account of the main debates in the field, I will rely on two articles by political geographers David Newman and Anssi Paasi. Although geography scholars have studied boundaries since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, border research did not take off until the 1990s (Newman and Paasi 1998: 189, Newman 2006: 144). During the 1990s, scholars from other fields also became increasingly interested in borders and several research centers were established (Newman and Paasi 1998: 186-7). Those years also witnessed the emergence of a "borderless world discourse" (Newman 2006: 143-4), influenced by the emergence of cyberspace and Manuel Castell's space of flows (Newman and Paasi 1998: 192). Yet, Newman recognizes the limitations of borderless theories (2006: 146). Economics and information science have been the main academic disciplines that have developed the borderless world discourse (Newman and Paasi 1998: 199, Newman 2006: 146). Yet, scholars in other fields such as law, geography, political science, sociology, or the humanities have contested the borderless world discourse (Newman 2006: 146). Rather than disappearing, borders adopt new shapes and locations. Newman and Paasi summarize this idea stating that "the world of cultural and economic flows is concomitantly also a world of structural transformation, uneven regional development and spatial differentiation" (Newman and Paasi 1998: 193). Regarding new directions in interdisciplinary border studies, Newman emphasizes the need to study "border narratives" (2006: 152). Newman and Paasi refer to Margaret Somers to explain that "social life is typically 'storied', and that it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand and make sense of the social world and constitute our social identities" (Newman and Paasi 1998:

195). Indeed, textual and discourse analysis can offer new perspectives and findings in border studies. Narratives emerge from people's perception and experience of their most immediate realities and offer a rich body of information to be analyzed. This dissertation will contribute to this line of research within border studies, as it puts a narrative form (films) at its center.

As much as geographers have traditionally focused on state boundaries and now realize the need to include narratives in their research on borders, scholars in the humanities have also incorporated geographic notions to their work, as Kathleen Newman points out (2009: 5). The humanities witnessed a boom in border studies in the 1990s after the publication of Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* in 1987 (see Benito and Manzanas 2011: 2). In this work, Anzaldúa makes a key distinction between border and borderland. A border is the physical line that divides two territories, whereas a borderland is a loosely-defined area characterized by cultural influences from different sides of the border (2012: 25). The concept of the borderland leads Anzaldúa to root for a "mestiza consciousness," which consists in tolerating ambiguity, being flexible, defying cultural boundaries and the borders of the mind (2012: 101-2). Scholars now use the US-Mexico border(land) as a metaphor to refer to divisions at a local, regional, national, and transnational level. Camila Fojas, among others, argues that in the United States "the southern line replaced the western frontier as a major organizing symbol of popular culture [in the twentieth century]" (Fojas 2008: 184). In effect, many American Studies scholars define their field through border metaphors. In the 2004 Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, Shelley Fisher Fishkin envisioned American studies as "a place where borders both within and outside the nation are interrogated and studied, rather than reified and reinforced" (2004: 20). Similarly, Hortense Spillers asks provokingly "Who cuts the border?", "Who has the right to claim America?" (in Kessler-Harris 1992: 308-9). As the second question shows, Spillers

does not only refer to those who live on the borderlands, but to the multiple identities and cultures that form the U.S.A. On the contrary, Hamid Naficy criticizes the "universalized" use of Anzaldúa's "borderland [*mestiza*] consciousness," arguing that some scholars overlook the historical, geopolitical specifities of borderlands (2006: 124). Instead, he provides a more rigid definition of "borderland consciousness" by linking it directly to physical, geographical borders (2006: 124). Yet, Anzaldúa explains that this consciousness applies "whenever two or more cultures edge each other" (2012: Preface). As the film *The Visitor* (Thomas McCarthy, 2007) shows, experiences that are typical of the borderlands also take place far away from physical borders like the Mexico-US boundary. *The Visitor* is set in New York City and presents the interactions between a U.S. American university professor and three undocumented people: a Senegalese woman, her Syrian partner, and his Syrian mother. In this film, New York City is a 'city-borderland' where the protagonists come together and learn from each other. Yet, institutions silently enforce deportation and eventually tear people apart. In this manner, the film also evinces that borders do not need to be physical and visible to create, as Anzaldúa puts it, "una herida abierta:" an open wound (2012: Preface).

In 1990, David Maciel published *El Norte: The US-Mexican Border in Contemporary Cinema*, one of the first books on border cinema. In *El Norte,* Maciel distinguishes among three main different transnational perspectives of the border in cinema: "North American commercial cinema, independent cinema, and Mexican commercial cinema" (3). Two decades after the publication of *El Norte: The US-Mexican Border in Contemporary Cinema,* border and transnational films have become much more diversified. In 2009, Mette Hjort described nine different categories of transnational cinema: "epiphanic transnationalism, affinitive transnationalism, milieu-building transnationalism, opportunistic transnationalism, cosmopolitan

transnationalism, globalizing transnationalism, auteurist transnationalism, modernizing transnationalism, and experimental transnationalism" (Hjort 2009: 16). Such a variety of film-making and narrative practices has its origins in the geographical, cultural, and economic interstices where transnational cinema develops. Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden explain that transnational cinema deals with interactions between the local and the global and "is most 'at home' in the in-between spaces of culture" (Ezra and Rowden 2006: 4). Camila Fojas provides a clear example of transnational border cinema in her analysis of the replication of "the national boundary" at a local level (in Los Angeles) in films like *El Norte* (Gregory Nava, 1983), *Star Maps* (Miguel Arteta, 1997), and *Bread and Roses* (Ken Loach, 2000) (2008: 186). Even though the local and the global are present in most transnational films, globality and locality have disparate meanings in different parts of the world. Transnational films depict a myriad places and themes, including bureaucracy and legal loopholes in *The Terminal* (Steven Spielberg, 2004), *Crossing Over* (Wayne Kramer, 2009), *Auf der Anderen Seite/The Edge of Heaven* (Fatih Akin, 2007), *The Visitor*, and *Like Crazy* (Drake Doremus, 2011); borderlands in *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (Tommy Lee Jones, 2005), *Babel* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006), and *The Burning Plain* (Guillermo Arriaga, 2008); transnational interrelatedness in *Syriana* (Stephen Gaghan, 2005), *Babel*, *In Time* and *360* (Fernando Meirelles, 2011); gang violence in *Sin Nombre* (Cary Fukunaga, 2009); cross-border businesses and industries in *Traffic* (Steven Soderbergh, 2000), *Bordertown* (Gregory Nava, 2006), *Savages* (Oliver Stone, 2012), *Upside Down* and *Elysium*; and human trafficking in *Black Brown White* (Erwin Wagenhofer, 2011). Some films like *Looper* (Rian Johnson, 2011), and *Cloud Atlas* (Andy and Lana Wachowski and Tom Tykwer, 2012) even challenge national and time constrictions at once. In general, border films have proliferated in recent years and the above list is a very small sample of what is on offer.

The science fiction film occupies a privileged position to interrogate border(lands) in the current debates about transnational societies. Science fiction (SF) is the only film genre that interrogates the future. Yet, it draws from its historical and present contexts (King and Krzywinska 90, Smith 2002: xi). SF cinema projects visions of alternative past, present or future worlds (King and Krzywinska 2000: 7). By opening up to disparate possibilities, SF films often invite viewers to reflect about their societies. The science fiction genre, then, constitutes an ideal medium to track historical evolution, interrogate the current state of social affairs, and discuss the future. Charles Ramírez Berg's "Immigrants, Aliens, and Extraterrestrials: Science Fiction's Alien 'Other' as (Among Other Things) New Latino Imagery" offers an example of science fiction's ability to capture social discourses. Ramírez Berg explains that distinctions between self and (immigrant) other are at the core of the science fiction film genre (2012: 403-5). His central claim is that "Alien[1] Others" stand for Latin American immigrants in SF films (2012: 404-5). On a general level, James Kneale and Rob Kitchin point out that humans transfer their worldview to other imagined worlds (2002: 12). Ramírez Berg relies on figures to develop his point: of all "unauthorized immigrants" to the US, 80 per cent are Latin American and 60 per cent, Mexican (2012: 423). In addition, Ramírez Berg reports on the increase in cross-border economic interactions after WWII and the growing militarization of the border from the 1990s to the 2010s. (2012: 406, 423). By equating aliens to Aliens, Ramírez Berg interprets James Cameron's *Aliens* (James Cameron, 1986) and *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009) as films that depict US-American exploitation of Latin America's economy and natural resources (2012: 421). Ramírez Berg also notes that Aliens are usually depicted as "Destructive Monsters" or "Sympathetic

[1] Ramírez Berg spells the science fiction Alien with a capital 'A' and the immigrant alien with a lower-case 'a' (2012: 404).

Aliens" (Ramírez Berg 2012: 424). In many SF films, these A/aliens must be killed or expelled, that is, deported (2012: 407). Ramírez Berg's description of subordination, 'othering', and rejection in SF films reveal that border(land) particularities come to the surface in SF cinema.

Apart from the appearance of border(land) features in Ramírez Berg's interpretations of Aliens, SF cinema has traditionally explored mechanical and technological frontiers and the borders between them and the human body and the mind. From the 1890s, when the first films were made, until the 1950s, SF films presented the fascination and anxieties that emerged from the new role of humanity in a world of industrialization and mechanization (Johnston 2011: 70). Several scholars also observe that 1950s and 1960s SF cinema created a nuclear other as a result of concerns about the Cold War, atomic weapons, UFOs and "the space race" (Johnston 2011: 73, King and Krzywinska 2000: 4, Ramírez Berg 2012: 403). In the years between the 1960s and the 1980s, critics note that science fiction films continued to develop previous themes and filmmakers invested efforts in aesthetics and visual effects (Johnston 2011: 103). Vivian Sobchack remarks that clear-cut differences between self and other increasingly blurred towards the end of the 1980s (1988: 240). Similarly, Geoff King and Tanya Krzywinska point out that in the 1990s "outer space [was] replaced by digital 'inner' space as the new frontier" (King and Krzywinska 93). Keith Johnston notes that, since the 1990s, "biological change" and "genetic manipulation" have emerged as the "ultimate threat" for the human body (2011: 112-3). Following developments in technology and biotechnology and the emergence of postmodern discourses, films such as *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982), *Total Recall* (Paul Verhoeven, 1990), *Johnny Mnemonic* (Robert Longo, 1995), *Dark City* (Alex Proyas, 1998), and *The Matrix* (Andy and Lana Wachowski, 1999) explore the borders between fixed and unstable identities, real and fake memories, and the mind and new virtual realities. More recently, Christine Cornea

wondered whether contemporary SF cinema does not have anything else to offer other than "digital spectacle" (2007: 267). Visually spectacular, action-filled blockbusters that are devoid of meaning proliferate now perhaps more than ever. *Oblivion* (Joseph Kosinski, 2013) or *After Earth* (Manoj Night Shyamalan, 2013) are the latest examples of this trend. Yet, some recent science-fiction films also present imaginary worlds that connect to social realities and raise questions about the world we live in. *In Time*, *Upside Down*, *Total Recall*, and *Elysium* have reframed or even abandoned biotechnological and digital frontiers to focus on physical borders. These films present dystopian worlds that point to contemporary human concerns about the role of physical borders in the organization of space, capital flows, and human movement.

Since its inception, cinema has developed a singular relationship with space and urban environments. Early cinema-goers were fascinated by the "train effect:" the projection of the city's modern buildings and means of transport (Mennel 2008: 8). Barbara Mennel asserts that "like cities, films engage in processes of production and reproduction of social relations in spatial configurations" (Mennel 2008: 15). Likewise, Mark Shiel maintains that cinema, due to its visuality, holds a privileged position to represent spaces and bring to light the articulation of social life in cities (2001: 6). Michael Smith ascribes this ability more specifically to science fiction (2002: xii). Indeed, SF cinema, thanks to its potential to create alternative worlds, has constructed some of the most enthralling land-/cityscapes. Geoff King and Tanya Krzywinska identify science fiction as the cinema of "vertiginous high-rise landscapes", "polymorphous architectural design", "retro-futurist production style", and "teeming cityscapes" (2000: 73). King and Krzywinska's description may give the impression that SF cinema falls into spectacular, yet superficial, representations easily. Nevertheless, SF cinema does not only produce wonder.

Kitchin and Kneale observe that many of the stunning images that SF produces are "spatial metaphors" (2002: 9). As metaphors, science fiction's striking, multi-layered constructions encourage viewers to read into imagined and real spaces and enquire into the dynamics that govern them. Spaces in SF films, therefore, constitute rich sources to investigate the sociocultural implications of geographical organization and architectural design.

Upside Down, like *Blade Runner* before it, saturates its land-/cityscapes and the frame. Scholars have noted that, even after multiple viewings, *Blade Runner*'s mise-en-scéne includes so many details that it is almost impossible to perceive all the nuances (King and Krzywinska 2000: 73). Kevin McNamara claims that close analysis of *Blade Runner*'s postmodern cityscape unveils the socioeconomic development of the (imagined) city (1997: 425). Giuliana Bruno describes *Blade Runner*'s representation of architecture as "an excess of scenography" (1987: 69). Vivian Sobchack associates *Blade Runner* and excess of scenography with what she terms "inflated" space (1988: 262). She explains that inflated spaces are detail-crammed and feature "an abundance of things" (1988: 262). Apart from inflated spaces, Sobchack identifies two more kinds of postmodern space in SF film: "deflated" and "absolute" (1988: 255). A "flattened," virtual appearance and "electronic simulation" define deflated space (Sobchack 1988: 260-1). Absolute space combines inflation and deflation (Sobchack 1988: 269). Consequently, "superficial" and "complex" are the words that best define it (Sobchack 1988: 270). People and objects in constant movement also differentiate absolute space from the other two categories (1988: 270-1). In general, Sobchack stresses the textual character of 1970s and 80s films, which do not simply present space as background (1988: 231). She implies that viewers can 'read' space, and that it, therefore, stands out as much as any other element in the film. Vivian Sobchack's three categories of postmodern space (inflated, deflated, and absolute) contribute to

shedding light on social structures and the distribution of economic resources in *Upside Down*, particularly in the second chapter of this dissertation.

Upside Down's high-concept, its prominent land-/cityscapes, and its convoluted mise-en-scène call for an analysis of the film that incorporates geographic considerations. Given that space is a major attribute of cinema in general and science fiction—and *Upside Down*—in particular, some scholars propose using a geographical approach to study films. Mark Shiel outlines a set of features to analyze the articulation of spaces in a film. He includes: "the space of the shot; the space of the narrative setting; the geographical relationship of various settings in sequence in a film; [and] the mapping of a lived environment on film" (2001: 5). Shiel's enumeration proves ideal for geographic film analysis, as it considers the particularities of the film medium (shots, setting, relationship among sequences) and favors connections between the film's diegesis and 'real' spaces. People (and characters) constantly go through places, stay in them, and shape them. Therefore, it is essential to bear in mind the human dimension of spaces. Following Yi-Fu Tuan's conception of space and place, this dissertation also focuses on characters' "experience" of their environments (2001: 3-7). In order to do so, I will scrutinize characters' behavior in different spaces. In other words, I will pay attention to their "enunciatory operations" (Certeau 1984: 99). Michel de Certeau explains that people's movements in space, their immobility, or their presence in a specific space are all "enunciatory operations" (1984: 99). Since this dissertation deals with geographic matters, it is inevitable to refer to notions of space and place. Yi-Fu Tuan notes that "'space' is more abstract than 'place'" (1977: 6). More specifically, Mike Crang explains that space is often related to detachment and place to familiarity and comfort (1998: 100). Yet, scholars often point out that the line between both terms is blurred (Tuan 1977: 6, Massey 1994: 1, Hubbard 2005: 45-7). This dissertation employs

space and place as flexible, complementary terms that are not necessarily opposed to each other. The representation of spaces and places through moving images and characters' 'enunciatory operations' constitute key points of examination in this analysis of *Upside Down*.

1. *Upside Down*: The Transnational Context.

Before turning to a visual analysis of *Upside Down*, this chapter will introduce *Upside Down*'s high-concept, its convoluted mise-en-scène, and its connection to Juan Solanas' transnational life and his cinema. Given the complex high-concept that *Upside Down* is based on, it is necessary to provide a summary of the film. *Upside Down* portrays two twin planets (Up Top and Down Below). While Up Top looks like a modern city full of skyscrapers, Down Below resembles a poor city in ruins. Both worlds are located on top of each other and each of them has a different gravity. Even though both planets are separated, there are three points of contact: the Sage Mountains, a skyscraper that connects both worlds, and a café. Yet, heavily policed borders prevent citizens from one planet from contacting people from the other. At the beginning of the film, a narrator explains the three basic rules to understand the *Upside Down* universe. First, "all matter, every single object, is pulled by the gravity of the world that it comes from and not the other." Second, "an object's weight can be offset using [attaching to it] matter from the opposite world: inverse matter." Third, "after a few hours of contact, matter in contact with inverse matter burns." *Upside Down* concentrates on the life of Adam (Jim Sturgess), an orphan from Down Below, who visits his aunt Becky (Kate Trotter) on the weekends. Adam usually goes to the mountains near his aunt's house. There, he meets Eden (Kirsten Dunst), a girl from Up Top. Both kids keep meeting at the top of the mountains until they are grown-ups. At that point, the border police find them in the border area, separate them, and they never see each other for years. One day, Adam finds out that Eden works for TransWorld, a transnational company from Up Top. He decides to apply for a job to develop an anti-aging cream that he had previously been working on at a workshop Down Below with his friends Alfred (Blu Mankuma) and Pablo (Nicholas Rose). At TransWorld, Adam becomes friends with a worker from Up Top, Bob (Timothy Spall), who

helps him contact Eden. In addition, Adam uses part of the inverse matter that the company provides him with to devise clothes that invert his body's gravity and allow him to go Up Top. Adam and Eden meet several times. Their meetings' duration, however, is limited by border police raids and the scant time that inverse matter lasts outside of a refrigerator (after a while, it catches fire). Bob and Adam also collaborate in developing the final stages of the face-lifting product and come up with a potion that allows people to invert their gravity and cross to the other planet. At the end of the film, Eden and Adam conceive a child that belongs to both worlds. For the epilogue, the film leaps a few years forward and portrays a universe where Up Top and Down Below have become equally developed societies.

Although *Upside Down* has received mixed reviews, most critics highlight one aspect of the film: its spectacular mise-en-scène. Critics have praised the originality of the high-concept that the film develops and its imagery, but they have also criticized its weak and simplistic love story. *Upside Down*'s trailer aroused some high expectations before the film's release. Stuart Heritage, from *The Guardian*, who calls attention to the contemporary abundance of blockbusters and sequels, wonders: "could it [*Upside Down*] turn cinema in 2012 on its head?" and "outdo them all?" Yet, later reviews point out some flaws in the film. Richard Corliss (*Time Magazine*) notes some lack of narrative energy. Frank Scheck (*Hollywood Reporter*), along with Corliss, mentions the characters' one-dimensionality. Moreover, Michael Phillips (*Chicago Tribune*) and Frank Scheck condemn the film's use of physics. On the contrary, other critics seem more open to suspend their disbelief and follow the story. In *Los Angeles Times*, Gary Goldstein provides perhaps the most accurate synthesis of the film. He advises: "It's best not to overthink the sci-fi love story [in] *Upside Down* and just enjoy its dazzling visuals, dream-like inventiveness and lush romanticism." Similarly, Michael O'Sullivan from *The Washington Post*

compliments the film's special effects and its cinematography, but warns that "the rest of *Upside Down* ultimately gets weighed down by its own ponderous, and increasingly contradictory, logic." In *The New York Times,* Stephen Holden relentlessly criticizes every aspect of the film from soundtrack to production design, including the cinematography, the story, the representation of "a clichéd evil corporation," and the idea of showing two worlds on screen. While *Upside* Down may have some flaws, stating that the film is "simply awful" (as Holden has done) seems a sweeping statement. Solanas' film concentrates its efforts on offering elaborate visual material and, thereby, certainly presents an original idea. Scheck asserts that *Upside Down* "boasts visual imagination to spare;" Ann Hubbard, from *Los Angeles Times*, emphasizes the film's depiction of "inverted worlds" that "share the same frame;" Stuart Heritage praises the film's "Inception-y" style (referring to Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010)), and Gary Goldstein celebrates its "eye-popping imagery." These examples show that *Upside Down* employs a complex visual style that calls for attention to details. Even though Holden and Goldstein think that the film's sociopolitical message lacks complexity, close visual analysis may reveal the contrary. In fact, *Upside Down*'s singular concept and visuals present an elaborate depiction of transnational interactions.

Juan Solanas' life and cinema connect with *Upside Down*'s transnational subject matter and its elaborate mise-en-scène at several levels. Scholars note that transnational cinema often relates to filmmakers' backgrounds (Hjort 2009: 21, Naficy 1999: 133-4, Naficy 2006: 113). *Upside Down*'s transnational concerns appear to stem from Juan Solanas' life course[2]. Juan Solanas was born in Buenos Aires in 1966. His father, Fernando Solanas, is a well-known Argentinian director and politician. Fernando Solanas' dissent with Argentina's authoritarian

[2] Juan Solanas' biographical details come from his profile in the section "Cast and Crew" of the *Upside Down* official website (www. http://upsidedown-movie.com/#cast-and-crew).

regime and fear of reprisals led them to flee Argentina in 1977 and settle in Paris. There, Juan Solanas studied Art History and Philosophy at university. Later on, he got involved in filmmaking due to his passion for photography. He worked in Argentinian and French productions and directed a short film, *L'Homme Sans Tête/The Man Without a Head* (2003), and the feature film *Nordeste/Northeast* (2005). His latest film, *Upside Down*, is a French-Canadian production that has an American, Argentinian, British, Canadian, and French cast and crew. *Upside Down*'s script also reflects the transnational character of the film. Cecilia Conde mentions that Solanas first wrote the screenplay in Spanish, translated it into French, and eventually into English (2013). In short, Juan Solanas' life and his latest film, *Upside Down,* reflect influences from a variety of places.

The political and exilic background of Juan Solanas' family also appears to have shaped his cinema. In a recent interview, he comments: "I am a son of exile. Politics are present throughout the course of my life. They are vital in what they do to the world, to reality, to the air we breathe, and that fascinates me" (in Conde 2013). Juan Solanas' words signal the influence of his father's concept of cinema and politics. In 1969, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Gettino published "Towards a Third Cinema." In this manifesto, they criticize Hollywood films (first cinema) and auteur films (second cinema). Instead, they advocate for a third cinema that is politically engaged in raising consciousness against "neocolonization" (2000: 268). This kind of cinema favors formal experimentation, alternative distribution networks, and open endings that foster discussion and critical thinking (Solanas and Gettino 2000: 278, 280, 283-4). Although Juan Solanas' cinema demonstrates his exilic awareness and denounces inequalities, it does not show a clear militant profile. Solanas' *Nordeste/Northeast,* along with *Upside Down*, reflects a transnational/cosmopolitan consciousness. *Nordeste* stars Carole Bouquet as Hélène, a French

executive woman who travels to the Formosa province, in Argentina's Northeast, to adopt a child. Solanas' film deals with the region's poverty, decay, institutional corruption and indifference, child traffic and prostitution. *Nordeste* criticizes the distribution of wealth at local and global levels. A character reflects that with the money paid by Hélène for an illegal adoption, fifty poor Argentinian families could live for a long time. Despite featuring only two main stories and a small cast of three main characters, *Nordeste* connects characters from different parts of the world in multiple, unexpected ways. By doing this, the film foregrounds the interconnectedness of contemporary life. *Nordeste* features some of the characteristics of what Hamid Naficy terms "the alternative mode of production" (1999: 131). The film includes "everyday non-dramatic pauses and long silences" (Naficy 2006: 120). Juan Solanas uses fixed and hand-held cameras and also lets the actors improvise their lines. Carole Bouquet, whose native language is French, learnt Spanish for the film and improvised some of her lines in (imperfect) Spanish. In addition, *Nordeste* offers no closure: the film just stops and does not hint what the characters' lives may be like in the future. Just as *Upside Down*, *Nordeste* denounces uneven opportunities and development at multiple—local, regional, global—levels and provides viewers with food for thought. Even though *Nordeste* and *Upside Down*'s tones are different from Fernando Solanas and Octavio Gettino's concept of third cinema, both films exhibit a transnational/cosmopolitan consciousness that connects with third cinema's sociopolitical concerns.

Photography and visuality feature prominently in *Upside Down* and Juan Solanas' previous filmography. The development of Juan Solanas' filmmaking skills is closely linked to his father's directing career. He started working in his father's films by using his photographic skills. He collaborated with director of photography Felix Monti as color grader in *Sur/South*

(Fernando Solanas, 1988) and later in *La Peste/The Plague* (Luis Puenzo, 1992) and *El Viaje/The Voyage* (Fernando Solanas, 1992). Eventually, he became director of photography in *La Nube/Clouds* (Fernando Solanas, 1998). *Upside Down*'s cinematography and mise-en-scéne draw from Juan Solanas' first short film *L'Homme sans Tête/The Man Without a Head* (2000), which was awarded the Jury Prize for Best Short Film at the 2003 Cannes Film Festival. Both films present a fantastic/science fiction atmosphere featuring protagonists who live in dimly-lit austere rooms near shabby industrial landscapes located beside modern buildings and giant billboards. *Nordeste* also depicts spartan, worn house interiors and dirty, broken walls in a neighborhood in ruins. In general, faded colors and decay characterize spaces in every Solanas' film. *Upside Down* is not simply a pastiche of previous films. The film presents some technical innovations that evince the centrality of cinematography in Solanas' films and contribute to articulating the film's transnational plot. *Upside Down*'s crew created a single shot out of two different shots, one of them turned upside down. In order to do so, there are two matching sets, one beside the other, where shooting takes place simultaneously ("Turn Your World" 2012: 16). In an interview with *L'Écran Fantastique*, Solanas explains that the first part is shot with a normal camera that sends the shot to a computer. The computer analyzes the shot and sends the information to another camera that films the other set reproducing the inverse movements (in Gilbert 2013: 35). Solanas mentions that cameras do all this process in real time. He calls this technique "master/slave," which means that technology serves narration (in Gilbert 2013: 35). In order to make the acting more natural, the crew also installed transparent teleprompters so that each actor could see what the actor on the other set was doing. In this manner, the actors and the crew could see the final image as it was being shot (Solanas in Gilbert 2013: 35). These new techniques also embody the film's transnational preoccupations, as the frame reflects a division that characters aim to surpass. In *Upside Down*, Juan Solanas combines a transnational plot with an inventive mise-en-scène in

order to advance a cosmopolitan sociopolitical message. In this manner, Solanas draws from previous works and experiences and creates something new. As other 'cosmopolitan transnational' filmmakers, Solanas "move[s] back and forth between different sites" (Hjort 2009: 21).

2. Two Sides of a Border: Affluent Capitalism and its Backyard

Upside Down presents two aesthetically different spaces: Up Top and Down Below. Up Top includes spaces that resemble Vivian Sobchack's description of deflated spaces (1988: 257-8). A clear example of deflated space, according to Sobchack, are the virtual, electronic settings in *Tron* (Steven Lisberger, 1982) (Figure 1) (1988: 257-8). However, *Upside Down*'s spaces, unlike those in the 1980s films that Sobchack describes, do not register "electronic simulation" (Sobchack 1988: 256). Instead, *Upside Down* has incorporated an electronic look to some of its physical surfaces. As a result, it is TransWorld's corporate building structure and design, more than its use of electronic developments, that becomes threatening in the film. In spaces like Adam's boss' (James Kidnie) office, the corridors, and the lounge in floor 0, objects and furniture are almost non-existent. They verge on being virtual or electronic surfaces but, unlike in 1980s deflated spaces, viewers can still grasp their materiality: they also look modern, in the sense of modern architecture and design. The office on floor 0, where workers from both worlds work on top of each other, both reminds of the modern office in *The Crowd* (King Vidor, 1928) and *The Apartment* (Billy Wilder, 1960) and incorporates a new deflated look similar to the Pan Am space station lounge in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968). The office's large dimensions, stretching for hundreds of feet, the short distance between 'floor' and 'ceiling,' the abundance of light, and the symmetrical distribution of desks and people contribute to an appearance of uniformity and depthlessness throughout the room (Figure 2). In this manner, Transworld imposes a homogeneous style that encompasses every corner of each room. Such a representation ultimately reflects Transworld's totalitarian character. Yet, not every place falls into this pattern in Up Top. The higher a floor is, the less deflated its rooms are. *Upside Down* also employs intense sources of light in Eden's office on floor +7 to create a sense of

depthlessness; but, in this case, the film presents a smaller room where viewers can get a sense of its real dimensions. The different mise-en-scènes suggest that workers in Eden's floor enjoy more comfortable job positions than those in lower floors.

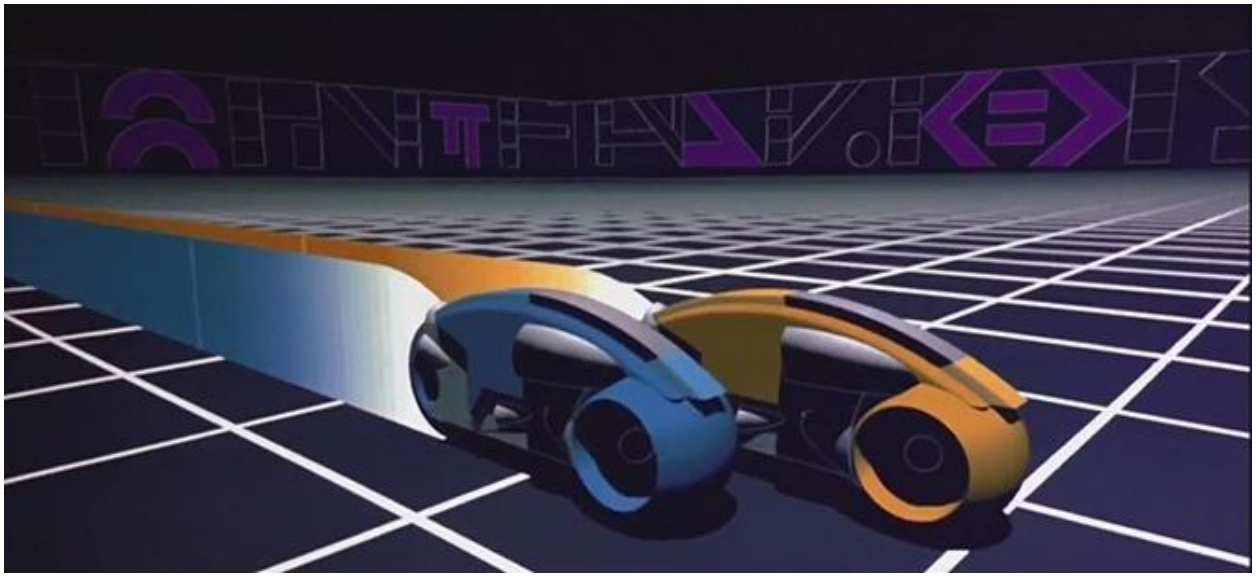

Figure 1: Virtual surfaces constitute a deflated space in *Tron*'s race scene.

Figure 2: TransWorld's office presents both a material and a deflated, electronic look.

Upside Down depicts inflated spaces through a saturated film frame. In spite of the sleek, polished appearance of Up Top's modern skyscrapers and their resemblance to the urban landscape in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), long shots of the city reflect Down Below's prominence in the 'sky.' The film, then, presents a cityscape with buildings that pile up to a conglomeration of roads, streets, lights, roofs, and lakes in the 'sky' (Figure 3). Both worlds usually appear together in the film, inflating the physical space of *Upside Down*'s universe and the film frame. The presence of one of the worlds onscreen implies that of the other. The film further emphasizes the protuberance of the world occupying the upper position in the frame through low-angle shots and characters who look up to the 'sky.' Similar representations of cities are becoming increasingly common. Artist Sachigusa Yasuda portrays world cities with polished skyscrapers whose sharp vertical lines stretch towards every side and corner of the photograph's frame (Figure 4). Yasuda employs 300 to 500 photographs to create a single image (Sansom 2013: 22). As a result, her works include, in her own words, "as many vanishing points as joint lines" (in Sansom 2013: 22). By inflating urban space, Yasuda's photographs produce a sense of alienation. Looking at her pictures means getting lost in them, as it is not possible to grasp the multiple perspectives she reflects. *Upside Down* and Yasuda's photographs comprise thousands of details that overwhelm the viewer's eye. Eventually, these inflated spaces present a chaotic urban environment threatened by relentless expansion.

Figure 3: Up Top's saturated frame

Figure 4: "Aerial 2-4" (Digital c-print, 120x120cm, 2011) by Sachigusa Yasuda.

Upside Down also inflates space by concentrating on specific spaces. Of all buildings in the film, the TransWorld tower is the most prominent. This building fills the frame in several shots. As Adam returns from work at Transworld, *Upside Down* includes a long shot that

resembles a scene in *Inception* (Christopher Nolan, 2010) in which Paris streets rise up as if they were walls (Figure 5). *Inception*, which is also a SF film, shows the almost-unlimited potential that dream-modification offers by radically altering Paris' shape and inflating the space of the frame. TransWorld also saturates space: the corporation's building—like Paris' rising streets—stands at the end of the street as if it were a wall, both sides of the street occupy the sides of the frame, and the streets Up Top cover the rest of the space (Figure 6). At the same time, the buildings on both sides of the street direct viewers' attention towards the TransWorld tower in the middle of the image. This shot from Down Below captures the imposing character of the corporation. In a different scene, a long shot of TransWorld from outside reveals that the building comprises a number of modules, giving the impression that there are several buildings within a building. This shot of the TransWorld tower, which recalls the multiple skyscrapers that formed the Tyrell corporation's headquarters in *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982), resembles the inside of a machine. The building's machine-like look presents TransWorld as an oppressing entity. In a different scene, a close shot of countless floor numbers in an elevator occupies the whole film frame, explicitly indicating TransWorld's relentless path towards expansion. In short, TransWorld stands out as a result of camera work that enhances its presence and dimensions. The titanic aspect of the corporation in the film then signals late financial capitalism's aspiration to ceaseless growth and progress.

Figure 5: The streets of Paris bend over and fill all the frame in *Inception*.

Figure 6: TransWorld's tower prominent, threatening presence.

Upside Down also projects an inflated Down Below through façades that brim with dirt, walls made out of patches, and an accumulation of objects. In *Blade Runner*, the film to which Giulana Bruno first applied the term "excess of scenography" (1987: 69), a workshop that produces artificial eyes is full of laboratory apparatus and apartments in the poorer part of LA are

crammed with old-fashioned objects, robots, artificial animals, and junk. In *Upside Down*, the workshop where Albert, Adam, and Pablo work is full of old television sets, phones, spare parts, and tools. "An abundance of things" defines inflated spaces both in *Blade Runner* and *Upside Down* (Sobchack 1988:262). In addition, façades Down Below brim with dirt and appear to be made of patches of different materials (Figure 7). Similarly, piles of rubble are part of Down Below streets. All these elements confer Down Below a profuse appearance, which, in turn, signals the economic system's tendency to produce waste. A similar kind of material excess to Down Below also appears in William Gibson's cyberpunk short stories. Gibson's stories represent dystopic sprawling cities where old appliances and materials accumulate. Just as the Lo Tek area in Gibson's "Johnny Mnemonic", Down Below is "jury-rigged and jerry-built from scraps" that the richer city does not want (1986: 17). Despite the fictionality of *Upside Down*'s worlds, its aesthetics and dynamics are closely linked to real places. As I will argue throughout this dissertation, Down Below's appearance and life conditions resemble Latin America. The workshop in Down Below reminds of Alejandro Lugo's photograph of the Cuauhtemoc market (Ciudad Juárez) in his "Photo Essay: Cruces" (2006) (Figure 8). Both places are a pastiche of crumbling materials. Similarly, the song "America," by the Mexican-U.S. American *corrido norteño* band Los Tigres del Norte and Puerto Rican band Calle 13 also illustrates the links between Down Below and Latin America. The song goes: "Soy America [Latina], soy lo que dejaron, toda la sobra de lo que se robaron" ("I am [Latin] America, I am what they left, the leftovers of what they stole"). Although this line in the song may seem like a sweeping provocative statement, the workshop in Down Below and the Cuauhtemoc market are made of leftovers: objects and materials that nobody else wants up North.

Figure 7: Workshop façade in Down Below

Figure 8: "Juarez is Burning: Life and Death at the Mercado Cuauhtemoc" by Alejandro Lugo (2006).

Down Below's postmodern space of excess registers the consequences of TransWorld's corporate expansion: waste. Most of the junk both from Up Top and Down Below remains in Down Below. TransWorld's machine-like building constantly expels fumes from its walls. Its

pipelines leak on Down Below, forcing Down Below's inhabitants to use protective gear to cross some areas. The first scene shows the police chasing some children who try to pick up some debris that has fallen from Up Top (which is illegal). The worn 'pavement' in the streets is full of clutter and waste from Up Top, recalling the representation of the Earth's surface in *Wall-E* (Andrew Stanton, 2008). In this film, the Earth is no longer inhabited by humans. Instead, robots clean the mountains of trash that humans left as a consequence of reckless production and consumption. In *Upside Down*, a giant, metal, old balloon structure through which Adam and Eden escape from the border police best exemplifies the connection between "excess of scenography" and industrial waste (Bruno 1987: 69). Reflecting on the role of waste in *Blade Runner*, Giuliana Bruno states: "the [postindustrial] system works only if waste is produced. The continuous expulsion of waste is an indexical sign of the well-functioning apparatus: waste represents its production, movement, and development at increasing speed" (1987: 66). In order to sell more, the system constantly needs to produce and waste more. Similarly, Vivian Sobchack asserts that "the omnipresence of waste" in films that inflate space illustrates that capitalism is working "at full capacity" (1988: 266). The abundance of waste in *Upside Down* also evinces that TransWorld is exploiting Down Below up to the limit.

The depiction of spaces in Down Below indicates that its people suffer from a lack of resources. Depending on the scene, two or three small light bulbs barely illuminate Adam's home. In addition, he uses 'illegal' inverse matter that falls from Up Top to heat his apartment. Several scenes show a street full of people going to work by bike. Bikes in Down Below do not necessarily indicate the environmental consciousness of its inhabitants. Rather, they evince their lack of economic resources. In Amsterdam, which is considered an 'environmentally friendly' city, streets in wealthy areas accommodate fewer bikes than those in more modest areas. At the

beginning of *Upside Down*, Adam explains that TransWorld paradoxically exploits Down Below's resources and sells overpriced oil and electricity back to them. *Upside Down*'s worlds capture Peter Marcuse's argument that "underneath chaos there are orders" (1995: 244). Marcuse argues that the intensification of certain capitalist and industrial practices since the 1970s is responsible for urban decay (1995: 245). Exploitation of natural resources, pollution, and decay are a main preoccupation of the SF genre. In *Blade Runner*, chimneys blast fire into the air, flying cars throw clouds of exhaust fumes into the air as they take off, and the scarce sources of light in people's homes contrast with the brightness of billboards. Overreliance in electricity and a permanent power shortcut are the main ideas behind NBC's television series *Revolution* (Eric Kripke, 2012-). Environmental concerns are also present in *Avatar* and *Cloud Atlas*. *Avatar* depicts humans' attempts to take over the natural resources of the planet Pandora. In *Cloud Atlas*, the city of Neo Seoul has built higher skyscrapers to avoid the effects of rising sea levels. Coinciding with the thematic preoccupations of these productions, *Upside Down*'s TransWorld corporation and Down Below's waste accumulation and lack of resources metaphorically bring to light the unsustainability of greed.

Upside Down also expresses differences between Up Top and Down Below by introducing a modification of the shot/reverse shot convention in continuity editing. Instead, Solanas' film employs a shot/reverse *and* inverted shot pattern. The film uses this technique in the mountains, when Adam signs the contract at TransWorld, when he chats in the lounge with Bob (Figure 9), or when he presents his facial product to TransWorld executives. This editing practice emphasizes the distance between people from both worlds and their disparate economic situations. The short animation film *Head Over Heels* (Timothy Reckart, 2012) also relies on a shot/(reverse and) inverted shot pattern to present a similar situation. *Head Over Heels* depicts

how an old couple lives separated in the same house. The woman lives on the floor and the man on the ceiling, or vice-versa, depending on the point of view the film employs. As in *Upside Down*, each character has a different gravity. *Head Over Heels* alternates between perspectives to show the characters' deteriorated relationship. Shot/(reverse and) inverted shots highlight differences and put an alternative narrative technique into practice. By using this kind of shots, *Upside Down* exercises one of the key qualities of transnational films: "a becoming-*unheimlich*" (Ezra and Rowden 2006: 11). Inverted shots present a literally opposite, unfamiliar perspective to viewers, who are used to upright shots. Just as Gloria Anzaldúa alternates between English and Spanish, or prose and verse in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Solanas' film combines 'normal' shots and inverted shots to reflect diversity.

Figure 9: *Upside Down*'s use of the shot/(reverse and) inverted shot technique.

Division and difference are not simply a coincidence in the film's narrative setting. As David Sibley notes, "the representation of social categories either side of a boundary defined by notions of purity and defilement and the mapping of this boundary onto particular place are not solely a question of fantasy. They translate into exclusionary practice" (1995: 68-9). In *Upside*

Down, TransWorld discriminates between 'pure' and 'defiled' workers and distributes them in space according to a pure/defiled categorization. Lagavullan (James Kidnie), a TransWorld executive, says to Adam: "Company policy doesn't normally allow for someone from Down Below to hold such an important position, but we're making an exception in your case." Paradoxically, the place where Adam works, floor 0, is the highest position any worker from Down Below can get to and the lowest for a worker from Up Top. In the same conversation with Adam, Lagavullan remarks: "we [TransWorld] scrupulously observe a full separation between worlds here. That means there's not to be any unnecessary contact with those Up Top." Lagavullan's comment encapsulates the aim behind the creation of a boundary: differentiation. David Sibley argues that classified or compartmentalized spaces favor discrimination and abjection (Sibley 1995: 80, 1999: 144-5). Bob, who works above Adam in floor 0, observes: "anything or anyone different is [...] frowned upon [in TransWorld]." Bob and Lagavullan's comments reveal that divisions and inequality in the film are the result of a pure/defiled 'logic' and its mapping.

Up Top implements three systems of geographical discrimination: a physical borderline, 'purified' spaces, and etiquette. Apart from gravity, fences also prevent people from Up Top and Down Below from interacting. Fences surround natural areas like mountains that potentially enable people from both planets to come into contact or exchange goods. The film originally presents these spaces as "quarry site[s]" through a sign on the fence, underlining the authorities' intentions to disguise the bound area as something different than a borderland. The fence appears again briefly during a chase scene on the Sage Mountains at the end of the film. Similarly, Café Dos Mundos features an almost-invisible line of barbwire that splits the dance floor in two halves. Despite the possibility that some of these borders may go unnoticed for people who see

the film for the first time, *Upside Down* calls attention to the impact they make on people's lives. When Adam thinks that he is not going to see Eden anymore, the frame's composition indicates that boundaries entrap people Down Below. A close shot of Adam frames the setting in a way in which the fence behind him covers most of the frame (Figure 10). Such a frame composition highlights Adam's entrapment, as he appears to be inside a cage. This shot is preceded by a low-angle shot in which the camera tilts towards the floor, further enhancing Adam's oppression. Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* (1954), despite having a completely different subject matter from *Upside Down*'s, employs similar techniques to show characters' alienation. Kazan's film also includes close shots of characters in which a coop's wired fencing covers all the frame evincing characters' frustration (Figure 11). Even though fences or borders are not clearly visible in *Upside Down*, the film stresses the devastating effects that rigid boundaries have in people's lives.

Figure 10: Adam feels trapped in *Upside Down*.

Figure 11: *On the Waterfront* and oppressive framing.

Despite the prohibition to cross borders, characters in *Upside Down* keep accessing restricted areas. Worn stretches of fence by the mountains allow Adam to venture into the mountains, where he gets to know Eden. Given the permeability of fences, Up Top also enforces a pure/defiled 'rationale' by constituting purified corporate spaces and automated discrimination systems. Up Top uses several procedures to guarantee that no 'alien' from Down Below gets into Up Top. The entrance to TransWorld from Down Below features several 'security' measures including scanning and weighing workers' bodies and belongings, checking names on a workers' list, and wearing identification tags at all times. In Up Top, different 'security' measures apply: workers only have to swipe their company card to get through controls. *Upside Down* also evinces disparities by not showing Bob and Eden, who are from Up Top, crossing any border or 'security' checkpoint when they go Down Below. On the contrary, Adam features in every checkpoint-crossing scene. The same protocols and practices apply at real-world airports, corporate buildings, and gated communities. Zygmunt Bauman explains:

> For the inhabitants of the first world—the increasingly cosmopolitan, extraterritorial world of global businessmen, global culture managers or global academics[—]state borders are levelled down, as they are dismantled for the world's commodities, capital and finances. For the inhabitant of the second world, the walls built of immigration controls, of residence laws and of "clean streets" and "zero tolerance" policies, grow taller; the moats separating them from the sites of their desire and of dreamed of redemption grow deeper, while all bridges, at the first attempt to cross them, prove to be drawbridges. (1998: 89)

The pure/defiled 'logic' is most evident when Adam sneaks into the Up Top part of the TransWorld tower and goes to the rest room. As Adam pees, his urine, instead of going down into the urinal, goes up to the ceiling because of gravity. His urine runs across the ceiling and finally touches a sensor. This sensor goes off and security personnel instantly go to the rest room. By detecting 'intruders' through their bodily waste, the film mockingly juxtaposes abjection and the purity of the corporate space. *In Time* also displays border-control mechanisms. In this film, New Greenwhich's bankers and police can follow the flow of time/money through their computers and video surveillance allows them to track any unwanted border/zone crosser. The use of these monitoring systems help them make sure that large amounts of time/money do not fall into poor people's hands. Despite the variety of control mechanisms that *Upside Down* and *In Time* include, they capture the same reality of a discrimination system that seeks to at least maintain, if not reinforce, the status quo.

Characters' behavior and appearance also register contrasts between Up Top and Down Below. In this sense, *Upside Down* reflects Anthony Giddens' thesis that spaces do not simply organize people, but also build "systems of interaction" (1984: 368). Long shots of floor cero in

TransWorld show workers Down Below wearing lab coats and workers Up Top wearing suits. Even though people from both worlds wear suits and dresses as they dance in Café Dos Mundos, the film hints that it is hard to buy suits, blazers, or shirts Down Below. People Down Below wear ragged clothes and Bob offers to get a shirt and a suit jacket for Adam. Clothes also reflect spatial divisions in Andrew Niccol's *In Time*. The film also focuses on two areas: Dayton (Time Zone 12), a working class area, and New Greenwich (Time Zone 4), a wealthy area. When Will Salas (Justin Timberlake) first crosses from Dayton, where his home is, to New Greenwich, he changes his casual clothes for a suit and a shirt. Later on, he keeps appearing with different casual or smart clothes depending on the area where he is. Since time is the currency in *In Time*, people who live in poorer areas are used to doing things quicker. Otherwise, they would earn less time, spend more, run out of it, and die. *In Time* includes a scene at a restaurant in New Greenwhich where a waitress remarks upon Will's speed at eating and asks him: "You are not from around here, are you?" Similarly, Eden teaches Adam how to drink a special beverage served at Café Dos Mundos. Clothing, etiquette, and behavioral habits define those who belong to a place and those who do not. All in all, *Upside Down* and *In Time* reveal embedded structures that contribute to delineating differentiated zones.

While the Up Top-Down Below division governs *Upside Down*, there are other discrimination mechanisms at work in the film. *Upside Down* includes other markers of exclusion such as ethnicity, gender, age, class, and economic status. Ethnicity is evident in Pablo and Alfred's location Down Below. Alfred is a black man and Pablo's name suggests a Latino origin. The tests for Adam's lifting cream at TransWorld also point to other discrimination practices. Adam first tries it on a dog. When his product is almost ready, TransWorld decides that Adam should try it on old women from Down Below. Thus, 'female' and 'old' mark those

who are most expendable for TransWorld. The corporation discriminates according to age and gender and benefits from the defenselessness of a group of people who need money. TransWorld also shows its contempt for old people by firing Bob because of his "seniority." The different levels in the TransWorld tower reflect a scale of social structures and hierarchies. Bob, who works in the lowest floor in the Up Top part of the TransWorld tower, lives in a semi-detached house in what seems a low-middle class neighborhood in the city's outskirts. The only part of Bob's house that appears onscreen is a garage full of different items that resembles Alfred's workshop Down Below. On the contrary, Eden, who works in an upper floor, lives in a high-rise building in the city center. Therefore, hierarchies do not only operate by an Up Top-Down Below geographic logic. TransWorld shows prejudice against people who do not conform to the white, Anglo-Saxon, young, male pattern. Yet, these norms only affect the lower ranks of *Upside Down*'s societies: Eden has a higher-profile job than Bob and the authorities do not take reprisals against her when she crosses the border.

As I suggested earlier in this chapter, several details indicate that Down Below corresponds to Latin America and Up Top to the United States. Up Top's high-rise modern architecture resembles New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, or San Francisco's skylines. For instance, *Crossing Over* (Wayne Kramer, 2009) includes footage of Los Angeles' skyscrapers that recalls the imposing character of Up Top's buildings (Figure 12). In addition, both the United States and Up Top are havens of corporate financial capitalism. As far as Latin America is concerned, the restaurant where Adam and Eden eat is called Café Dos Mundos (Two Worlds Café) and people dance to an Argentinian tango song in this place. One of Adam's friends is called Pablo and, when people get fired at TransWorld, the executives call out several names in Spanish. Moreover, Adam gives Bob a box from Down Below with an "El Pesado" sticker,

which sounds like a Latin American brand name. The TransWorld tower mirrors the organization of the maquiladora business and, thereby, it further strengthens Up Top's resemblance to the United States and Down Below's similarity to Latin America. Maquiladoras are mass production factories that U.S. companies establish in Mexican soil—but sometimes also in the U.S.—to benefit from cheaper labor and materials[3]. *Bordertown* (Gregory Nava, 2006) and *Crossing Over* reflect the poor working conditions in maquiladoras, including low wages, lack of security, and maquiladora-related crimes like rape and murder. Frida Kahlo's painting "Self-Portrait on the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States" (1932) also captures the similarity between Up Top-Down Below and U.S.-Mexico border interactions (Figure 13). In this painting, Kahlo presents an industrial and technological United States powered by the resources it steals from Mexico, a rural country in ruins. TransWorld, then, reflects the structures at work in Kahlo's painting and in maquiladoras. Despite TransWorld's resemblance to a maquiladora company, I refrain from referring to Down Below as Mexico because there is no evidence in the film that points to such a specific correspondence. While maquiladoras proliferate in Mexico and Mexicans are the largest migrant group in the U.S., many non-Mexican citizens migrate from Latin American countries to the United States (Ramírez Berg 2012: 423). For example, *El Norte* (Gregory Nava, 1983), *Sin Nombre* (Cary Fukunaga, 2009) and *La Jaula de Oro*/*The Golden Cage* (Diego Quemada, 2013) show people from countries like Honduras and Guatemala crossing Mexico in an attempt to reach the United States. In addition, Down Below's resemblance to the dilapidated Argentinian neighborhood in *Nordeste* and *Upside Down*'s use of Argentinian tango songs hint that inequalities produced by U.S. corporate capital affect all Latin American countries, from Mexico to Argentina. Therefore, I will refer to Latin America and the

[3] In 1994, NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) allowed the free flow of goods and money—but not of citizens— between Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Subsequently, the number of maquiladora factories increased after the implementation of this treaty.

U.S. when I write about the socioeconomic impact of the Up Top-Down Below boundary and to Mexico and the U.S. when I refer to the physical border.

Figure 12: An overhead shot of Los Angeles skyline saturates the frame in *Crossing Over*.

Figure 13: "Self-Portrait on the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States" (1932) by Frida Kahlo.

Upside Down's depiction of border surveillance highlights the growing militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border. Human rights activist María Jiménez started using the term "militarization of the border" in 1998 to refer to authorities' use of military bases; the execution of covert military operations; and the concentration of Border Patrol agents, (former) U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service personnel, and federal agencies by the border (*In Motion Magazine*). More recently, *The New York Times* reported on the use of war equipment like Black Hawk helicopters and drones (Miller, 2013). In *Upside Down*, border police squads chase anyone who ventures into the bounded area of the Sage Mountains. They carry shot guns and are accompanied by fierce dogs. Border officials shoot Adam in the shoulder during the first chase in the film and they also aim at him and Eden several times as they run away at the end of the movie. The militarization of the U.S. border is also evident in *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (Tommy Lee Jones, 2005). Jones' film evinces the inaptitude of a U.S. border patrol agent who punches border-crossers and shoots dead a Mexican migrant worker who is tending his goats in a corral by the border. Apart from exerting military practices at the border(land), 'security' forces in *Upside Down* take reprisals that are common in authoritarian regimes. The media inform of the hanging of three border-crossers. The police arbitrarily punish aunt Becky for letting her nephew go to the mountains. They set her house on fire and take her away—the film does not clarify whether she is jailed or executed. Later on, the police also abduct Adam and take him on a car ride to warn him that if he contacts Eden again, the authorities will sentence him to death. In this manner, *Upside Down* reflects and denounces the licentious, violent actions of some border agents.

Death is both part of *Upside Down*'s diegesis and a prevalent reality of the Mexico-U.S. borderlands. Apart from border militarization, *Upside Down* hints that corporate practices,

working conditions, and unauthorized border-traversing are causes of death in the borderlands. Adam's parents died in "the big blast," an explosion that resulted from TransWorld oil-pumping activities. Pablo tells Adam that his brother went Up Top and never came back. Other border films also revolve around the pervasiveness of death in the borderlands as a result of unequal relations among different local, regional, and global parties. Films do not only present the militarization of the border (*The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*), but also bureaucratic deportation procedures that split a mother from her son and eventually lead to her death (*Crossing Over*), exploitation and lack of resources (*In Time*; *Elysium*, Neill Blomkamp, 2013), feminicides (*Bordertown*, Gregory Nava, 2006*; Sin Nombre*), and gang violence (*Sin Nombre*). The extreme climate of the desert by the border also exposes a Mexican woman and two U.S. American kids to death in *Babel* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006). In this manner, border films identify multiple factors behind the death drama of the U.S.-Mexico/Latin America borderlands. Alejandro Lugo's "Photo Essay: Cruces" elucidates the connection between death and the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. In Spanish, cruces means both crossroads and burial crosses. Lugo juxtaposes photographs of the actual (cross)roads that connect the two sides of the border and of the crosses that evidence the pervasiveness of death in the borderlands. Ultimately, the deaths of people who are part of *Upside Down*'s diegesis illustrate the looming presence of death in the imaginary and the reality of the U.S.-Mexico/Latin America borderlands.

3. Natural Contact Zones, Border Cracks, and Transnational Love.

The resemblance between *Upside Down*'s narrative setting and some of the cities in the series "Cities & the Sky" in Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* serves to investigate the film's high-concept of placing one world on top of the other. Like *Upside Down,* Calvino's "Cities & the Sky 2" depicts two contrasting areas in the city of Beersheba. In Calvino's story, the inhabitants of Beersheba "*believe*" that there is one city "suspended in the heavens" and another "underground" [my emphasis] (1997: 100). They think that the city in the sky is "a city of pure gold, with silver locks and diamond gates, a jewel city," while the city underground is "the receptacle of everything base and unworthy," in short, "a fecal city" (1997: 100). Yet, towards the end of the story, the narrator revises people's beliefs and observes that the "projection" of the celestial city actually corresponds to people's image of the underground city and vice versa (1997: 101). Beersheba's inhabitants build *imagined* cities in their minds. Calvino's story is relevant to *Upside Down* in two ways. First, both "Cities & the Sky 2" and *Upside Down* create two opposing images and offer their readers or viewers different perspectives. Both stories place readers and viewers between two worlds. Second, even though Up Top and Down Below appear more physical—real—than Beersheba's projections, the inhabitants of *Upside Down*'s planets also imagine their neighboring worlds.

Concerning the first connection between Beersheba and *Upside Down*, the narrator in Calvino's story offers the reader two points of view: first, he focalizes Beersheba's inhabitants' beliefs about their city and, later on, he offers his own perception of Beersheba (1997: 100-101). Similarly, *Upside Down* sometimes reverses viewers' perspective of a planet in one shot. Apart from using shot/inverse shots to emphasize differences between both planets, Solanas' film deploys unusual shots, sometimes alongside other techniques, to present both planets as two

sides of a continuum. After meeting Eden, Adam jumps into the sea to extinguish the fire of the inverse matter attached to his body. When he gets rid of the inverse matter, Down Below's gravity attracts his body. Once Adam is halfway between both planets, the camera starts turning around and by the time he falls into Down Below's waters the shot has adopted an upright position again. *2001: A Space Odyssey* employs a similar kind of shot—the camera also turns around—when a stewardess enters the cabin to bring a meal to the pilots. By using this shot, both films acknowledge a transition between spaces and adapt their perspective in a continuous way. The scene in a back room at the TransWorld tower where Adam prepares to go Up Top also produces a similar effect of seamlessness. *Upside Down* relies again on techniques that *2001* employs—in this case, on a previous shot in *2001* in which the stewardess walks up to the 'ceiling'. *Upside Down*'s DVD Commentary shows that the set where Adam gets ready to go Up Top consists of a room that fits into a giant wheel (Figure 14). As in *2001*, the camera moves with the wheel as it rotates. Therefore, the shot does not reflect the movement of the room: only characters move on the screen. Jim Sturguess leans his body against the wall and, in this manner, he does not fall to the room's ceiling until the wheel has rotated 180 degrees. Again, a single shot captures Adam's passage from one gravity to another. By relying on this kind of shots, *Upside Down* suggests that Down Below and Up Top are part of a continuum.

Figure 14: Filming *Upside Down*: the camera moves alongside the back room set, which is fixed to a wheel.

As far as the second link between Beersheba and Up Top-Down Below is concerned, people Up Top and Down Below are part of what Benedict Anderson's terms "imagined communities" (2006: 7). Anderson explains that a nation is a group of people (a community) that imagines itself as limited (2006: 7). Clearly, Up Top and Down Below, as nations, have a clear sense of the limits and lines that separate them. Some scholars have noted the impact of media and other cultural materials in shaping boundaries (Appadurai 1996: 194, Newman and Paasi 1998: 196). Down Below receives most 'images' from Up Top through television. At the beginning of the film, a television channel broadcasts a contest program which draws lots for a job at TransWorld. In a different scene, the same television set displays the news, which report on the hanging of three border-crossers from Down Below. Both television programs reflect an Up Top point of view, presenting a job at TransWorld as a valuable prize and condemning Down Below citizens who cross the border. In Up Top's streets, speakers spread slogans like "TransWorld: energy for a better life, we're building your future." In this manner, TransWorld

attempts to look like a welcoming, efficient, green planet for Up Top citizens. These examples show Up Top's efforts to define its identity as superior to Down Below and, at the same time, combat any attempt to connect planets in any other way than through corporate business. *Upside Down* shows that the media shapes citizens' imaginations: after watching the news of three hanged men from Down Below, Alfred warns Adam that he is going to die if he goes Up Top. Yet, the media may not be as influential as it often seems. When two kids and Adam discuss whether everyone is rich Up Top, their opinions differ. Adam concludes: "They may be rich, yes, but it's definitely not paradise." This scene evinces that, apart from media-constructed images, other socio-cultural and geographical factors contribute to shaping Up Top and Down Below's imaginations.

Upside Down's distinctive narrative setting and the spatial (co-)relation between both worlds create the conditions for characters to produce their own images of the other world. The perpetual presence of both worlds on top of each other leads characters to wonder and speculate about the other planet. The film uses several low-angle shots to show Adam looking up to the sky/Up Top from Down Below's streets. He also appears looking at Up Top's streets through the glass ceiling on top of his bed. In addition, Eden imagines both worlds in her dreams and shows Adam her perception of the Sage Mountains in a paper model. Bob also expresses his interest in Down Below by asking Adam for some stamps to complete his collection. The film's emphasis on the characters' imagination and their interest in the other planet indicate their desire to get to know the other planet and interact with its inhabitants. Fascination with other worlds is a major element of the science fiction (film) genre. Georges Méliès' *Le Voyage dans la Lune/A Trip to the Moon* (1902) reflects the curiosity that the moon produces in human beings. Méliès' film illustrates humans' ability to imagine other worlds. The allure that visible distant places produce

is also evident in *Elysium.* Neill Blomkamp's film begins with the story of a child, Max, who dreams of going to Elysium. He is mesmerized by the silhouette of the wheel-shaped residential spaceship that floats above Earth. Humans' desire to explore suggest that crossing boundaries is inherent to them. Of course, many people cross borders in an attempt to survive or find a better life. Yet, in these SF films, characters' initiative to cross boundaries results from negotiating their mediated imagination and their local perceptions of a distant 'other'. Despite the dissemination of Up Top's political agenda through the media, Down Below and Up Top's spatial specificity, that is, the planets' constant presence on top of each other, encourages their inhabitants to construct their own images.

The Sage Mountains in *Upside Down* are the only natural space where people from both planets can interact. In the mountains, Adam and Eden bring their mediated and their speculative imaginaries and come into contact at a local level. While Arjun Appadurai emphasizes the influence of media(scapes) in locality (1996: 197), *Upside Down* reminds that personal (local) experiences of space are also crucial in shaping their sense of a place. This is most evident at the end of the film when both planets develop more 'contact' spaces. A priori, people can only cross temporarily to the other side, as gravity pulls people back to their planets. Even so, authorities Up Top and Down Below establish and police the fence that prevents people from accessing this area. Although the mountains are a natural 'contact zone', they are also a 'contact zone' governed by "asymmetrical power relations," according to Mary Louise Pratt use of the term (1992: 7). However, Eden and Adam turn this inhospitable space of clash into their own romantic space. Despite the prohibition to be in the mountains' area, Adam and Eden keep going up to the mountain peaks to meet each other. Since they cannot visit each other's worlds and the mountains is the only place where they can contact each other, they create their own romantic

space in the Sage Mountains. The two peaks were Eden and Adam meet are fascinating spaces for them. There, they get know each other and share information about their lives, societies, and planets. Eventually, they fall in love with 'the other' Up Top or Down Below. David Newman and Anssi Paasi explain that "local populations do not necessarily perceive social and spatial boundaries, as determined by transboundary interaction and/or shared or separate identities, according to the same categories that are determined by government officials" (1998:194). In effect, the couple does not recognize the "social and spatial boundaries" that their planet authorities attempt to enforce. At the beginning of the film, Eden asks Adam: "[can you] imagine we could go anywhere we wanted to?" and he replies: "we can." In the end, people's feelings and needs prove stronger than authorities' impositions.

TransWorld's anxiety about cross-border communication and boundary enforcement is not as efficient as it pretends to be. In fact, Café Dos Mundos and the TransWorld tower are both fortresses and cracks at the same time. David Newman observes that partially open borders benefit the authorities and corporate managers who—hypocritically—demand their closing (2006: 149). A partially open border allows for the circulation of energy sources, goods, money, and workers; but often only in the measure that the more powerful side deems appropriate. Café Dos Mundos, located Down Below, is the only social space that both planets share. Surprisingly, this café is the only place where people from both planets wear suits. This kind of clothing suggests that Café Dos Mundos is a place where the elites from Down Below go. The film invites to speculate that Down Below elites collaborate with Up Top in preserving the separation between their societies. *Elysium* and *In Time* also depict elites from impoverished territories who collaborate with those in wealthy areas. Nonetheless, the partial opening of the border in *Upside Down* also facilitates contacts between inhabitants from both worlds. Workers from both planets

interact in the office in Floor 0 and its lounge. Adam and Bob become friends and collaborate with each other, exchanging information, objects, and favors. Working at Transworld allows Adam to access the materials (inverse matter, an ID card, a blazer) that make it possible for him to access Up Top. Just as Café Dos Mundos looks like a theatre where two worlds come together, Adam shows the results of his anti-aging cream on a stage. Both scenes indicate that characters deceivingly stage their intentions: Up Top and Down Below rarely share spaces and Adam does not give the anti-aging cream formula to TransWorld. In short, the partial opening of the border in Solanas' film benefits the elites but also creates the conditions for citizens to challenge the status quo.

The fascination with the presence of the other, local experiences in contact zones, and border cracks allow Eden and Adam to start a relationship in spite of media propaganda and legal restrictions. Living in different planets/nations, the couple has a long-distance transnational relationship which is characterized by their inability to contact and meet each other as much as they wish. Several scenes reflect the unstable condition of the couple's relationship. Eden and Adam first come close to each other through a rope that Adam uses to pull Eden from her planet to his. When the border police burst into Café Dos Mundos, Adam risks his life by jumping onto the top of a cable car which bounces as he lands on it. At the end of the film, Eden and Adam run away from the border police by advancing through a line of concrete blocks hanging from an old balloon metal structure. The latest *Total Recall* version (Len Wiseman, 2012) includes a similar scene in which the protagonists, also a couple, run away from the authorities (a robot team led by a woman) jumping from a floating block to another. At first sight, both chase scenes in *Total Recall* and *Upside Down* just offer thrills for the audience. Yet, *Upside Down* also reflects the instability of the couple, which is torn apart at the end of the scene. An agent hits one of the

strings that sustain the concrete block where the couple stands, they struggle not to fall, but Adam eventually falls down and the police take hold of Eden (Figure 15). On the contrary, the couple in *Total Recall* escapes from the police. Later on, a shot of Adam looking at Up Top through the glass-ceiling on top of his bed and imagining Eden emphasize the uncertain situation of the couple and their desperation to be together. In *Fernliebe* (*Distant Love*, English translation to be released in November 2013), Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim point to the "invasive" character of national legislation and its inability to keep up with sociological changes regarding "world families" and love relationships (2011: 235-6). Likewise, *Upside Down* denounces the alienation that Eden and Adam experience as a consequence of the obstacles that authorities set on their way. In spite of the 'illegality' of the couple's cross-border relationship and the instability they have to endure, they make every effort to overcome adversities.

Figure 15: Adam and Eden's unstable transnational relationship.

Upside Down is part of a recent trend in cinema, which has recently directed its attention to transnational love relationships. One of the first scholars to notice the proliferation of these

films is Diane Negra, who recognizes the appearance of U.S. American-European liaisons in (post-) World War II films and calls attention to the emergence of "tourist romances" in the 1990s (2006: 171). Negra refers to films which tend to offer stereotypical portraits of U.S. American women who are in a life crisis and go to Europe to discover food, culture, nature, love, and close-knit communities (2006: 169-178). Her analysis focuses on films like *Only You* (Norman Jewison, 1994), *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994), *French Kiss* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1995), *The Matchmaker* (Mark Joffe, 1997) or *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999). More recent films have slowly begun to introduce non-European countries and more balanced gender representations. *Love Actually* (Richard Curtis, 2003), *The Holiday* (Nancy Meyers, 2006), *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (Woody Allen, 2008), *Eat Pray Love* (Ryan Murphy, 2010) and Richard Linklater's *Before Sunrise* (1995), *Before Sunset* (2004), and *Before Midnight* (2013) are proof of the prominence of the tourist romance sub-genre. In recent years, a greater diversity of themes and approaches to transnational love has emerged. Transnational family relations, that is, parents and children living at distance, appear in *Babel* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006), *Under the Same Moon* (Patricia Riggen, 2007), *Mammoth* (Lukas Moodysson, 2009), and *Aquí y Allá/Here and There* (Antonio Méndez Esparza, 2012). Borderland relationships are also becoming an increasingly common theme. Some examples are *The Burning Plain* (Guillermo Arriaga, 2008), *In Time,* and *Upside Down. The Other End of the Line* (James Dodson, 2008) and *Miss Kicki* (Hakon Liu, 2009) depict virtual long-distance relationships. Films like *Auf der Anderen Seite/The Edge of Heaven* and *Like Crazy* (Drake Doremus, 2011) consider the dynamics and limitations of transnational relationships. *Like Crazy* explores the everyday dynamics of a couple living at a distance, the personal and legal obstacles they find, and the authorities' implacable enforcement of borders and documentation policies. *Like Crazy*, as *Upside Down*, reflects the uncertainty and instability that transnational couples undergo. Yet,

unlike *Upside Down*, *Like Crazy* points to a new direction for films about transnational love relationships which consists in focusing on day-to-day dynamics of transnational relationships in physically and virtually hyper-connected societies that restrict human movements.

The instability that contact zones and transnational relationships generate leads characters to draw from a myriad sources. *Upside Down* does not only emphasize local encounters, but also local knowledge and traditions. At the beginning of the film, Adam's aunt, Becky, makes 'flying pancakes' with honey from pink bees. Becky gives Adam a book with the recipe for 'flying pancakes' and explains that pink bees make their honey with pollen from both worlds. Before giving Adam the recipe book, Becky mentions that it has been passed on from generation to generation. Later on in the film, Adam uses pink honey in his experiments to create a face-lifting product. Initially, his tests at the workshop Down Below prove unsuccessful. Yet, once he starts working Up Top, he has enough materials and resources not only to develop the product, but also to save part of the inverse matter and use it to temporarily reverse his body's gravity and go Up Top. Even though Adam complains: "we've nothing [Down Below]," it is the combination of knowledge, traditions, and opportunities that both planets offer that allows him to realize his plans. In addition, Bob takes over the final stage of the product development and registers its patent. Bob and Adam put the possibilities that both cultures offer them to the best use. *Upside Down*, thus, reflects transcultural practices. Mary Louise Pratt defines transculturation as a phenomenon of the contact zone by which "subordinate or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture" (1992: 6). In *Upside Down*, transculturation processes allow characters to draw from multiple sources, subvert the system, and, subsequently, create a new space.

Upside Down relies on the symbolism of the pink honey and the pink formula to underline the constitution of an alternative space to Up Top and Down Below's confined territories. Spots or rays of pink light appear whenever Eden and Adam are together at the top of the mountains, Eden's office, Café Dos Mundos, or when they talk on the phone. The use of this pink light suggests the formation of a space of connection between both worlds. Moreover, a fish, the first 'hybrid' being in the film—s/he belongs to both worlds—, appears within a pink floating bubble. Similarly, a pink light appears on the lower part of the frame as Eden tells Adam that she is pregnant (Figure 16). Eden can stay in Down Below because of the baby she carries. Eden and Adam's baby is different from any other human being: he physically belongs to both planets. The couples' baby is a result of two worlds, two cultures. Scholars often use terms such as "in-betweenness", "third space", "contact zone", "hybrid[ity]" or "intercultural world" to refer to borderland realities (Fregoso 1999: 170, Saldívar in Fregoso 1999: 171). These terms *define* the state of a space or the nature of a cultural process. Jesús Benito and Ana Manzanas, for example, assert that "hybridity is [...] the offspring of the border" (2011: 10). Gloria Anzaldúa's term "kneading" or "amasamiento" seems more appropriate to *describe* the process of cultural, human, and spatial blending that takes place in *Upside Down* (2012: 103). Kneading is a process of "uniting and joining," that shapes "both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings" (2012: 103). Anzaldúa's concept of 'kneading' is further informed by the process of becoming a "mestiza" (2012: 101). She explains:

> The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be a Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural

> personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode—*nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned.* Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. [my emphasis] (2012: 101)

In short, kneading—and becoming a mestiza—consists in drawing from all available sources. The pink honey, the pink face-lifting product, the fish, Bob's gravity-reversal potion, and pink light direct attention to a kneading process that culminates with Adam and Eden's baby and the eventual elimination of barriers between Up Top and Down Below.

Figure 16: At the end of the film, a dot of pink light—on Adam's blazer in this still—reminds viewers of other pink symbols (honey, fish, anti-aging cream) and the 'kneading' processes they represent.

Not only do Eden and Adam come together at the end of the film, Up Top and Down Below become similar spaces. *Upside Down*'s final scene implies that inequalities between both planets decrease or even vanish. As the camera pulls back from the couple at Café Dos Mundos,

the screen depicts a similar modern cityscape in both worlds. Most notably, Down Below now has high-rise skyscrapers and children from both planets play sports just a couple of feet away from each other. This shot suggest that Adam and Eden's efforts to abolish demarcations eventually lead to pan-American integration at social, political, and economic levels. Camila Fojas argues that "the cosmopolitan idea of political unification of the Americas" was "prevalent before the turn of the [twenty-first] century" (Fojas 2008: 184). While the idea of geopolitical cohesion in America may have died, the arts and the academia keep it much alive. The lyrics of the Mexican/U.S. band Los Tigres del Norte reflect an inter-American consciousness. In their songs "America" (featuring Calle 13) and "Somos Más Americanos" (featuring Zach de la Rocha), Los Tigres del Norte denounce the U.S. appropriation of the adjective 'American.' They further argue that the U.S. imposed the border upon Mexico and remind that America also includes all countries South from the U.S./Mexico border. In the academic realm, the Inter-American Studies Association has been promoting an interdisciplinary and transnational approach to the study of the Americas since 2009. Moreover, José David Saldivar's *Trans-Americanity: Subaltern Modernities, Global Coloniality, and the Cultures of Greater Mexico* (2012) points to a new paradigm in American Studies. Saldívar proposes a global approach to the study of the (trans-)American continent, incorporating theories of space and time (2012: xxviii). While Down Below and Up Top's parallel cityscapes indicate the constitution of a pan-American project, equality between both planets implies Down Below's adaptation to the features of Up Top's modern corporate architecture.

Whether *Upside Down*'s final scene may depict inter-American collaboration and development, the corporate homogenization of the Americas, or both does not seem the film's main concern. Adam, as a narrator, recognizes: "that's another story." Instead, *Upside Down*'s

ending raises questions. Solanas' film uses a shot that director Alejandro González Iñárritu calls "el abandonador"—literally, the one that leaves—(in Deleyto and Azcona 2010: 135). Iñárritu employs this shot in the last scene of *Babel*. He explains that it is a shot "in which we go from being very close to the characters, almost able to smell their skin, to giving them some space to breathe and look at them from a distance" (in Deleyto and Azcona 2010: 135). In *Upside Down* the camera pulls back from Adam and Eden kissing, viewers leave the couple gradually, and start witnessing the development that both planets have undergone. 'El abandonador' creates a cinematic time of reflection: the slow detachment from the characters and their environment brings viewers out of the story and encourages them to think about the 'real' world outside the film. Viewers may then wonder about the nature of borders, the conditions that create poverty and wealth, and the opportunities that transnational interactions governed by principles of equality and respect offer. Without considering the kind of social model that *Upside Down* depicts at the end of the film, the film clearly leaves a non-deterministic image. Like Stephen Frears' *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), which portrays the renovation of a run-down laundrette in a South London neighborhood, *Upside Down* depicts the development of a poor area and subverts assumptions about the defiled nature of people and places.

Conclusion

In the same way as *A Day Without A Mexican* draws attention to the central role of Mexicans in the U.S., *Upside Down* captures authorities' efforts to enforce boundaries and citizens' resistance to the limitations that borders impose. The analysis of *Upside Down* demonstrates, as David Newman and Anssi Paasi propound, that the study of borders benefits from considering the ways in which they are turned into narratives (1998: 195). *Upside Down* offers an insight into border(land) aesthetics, differentiation mechanisms and practices, the human consequences of maintaining rigidly divided areas, and people's tendency to act according to their needs and feelings and overcome 'legal' restrictions. SF films' ability to allude to real situations by imagining alternative worlds is evident in *Upside Down*. Just as SF films reflected Cold War tensions in the 1950s and anxieties about digital and biotechnological development in the 1980s, *Upside Down*—along with *In Time, Total Recall, and Elysium*—now points to the central role of borders and legal provisions in organizing movements in highly connected societies. This dissertation benefits from *Upside Down*'s combination of the SF film genre and a transnational/border subject matter. The geographical character of borders and science fiction's capacity to depict spectacular buildings and cityscapes contribute to the creation of visually prominent spaces that invite viewers to 'read' them.

By considering science fiction and borders, this dissertation has constructed a framework that privileges analysis of spaces in film. Vivian Sobchack's concept of inflated and deflated spaces has proved particularly helpful in elucidating the relationship and hierarchy between different spaces in the film. Inside TransWorld, a modern, austere uniformity creates deflated spaces that evince the corporation's authoritative nature. Yet, TransWorld also displays a certain degree of diversity, including more welcoming spaces—which are neither deflated, nor

inflated—in the upper parts of the building. Outside, Up Top's modern, polished façades fill the frame along with Down Below's streets, producing an effect of spatial inflation. Sometimes, TransWorld occupies most of the frame, further increasing the sense of inflation and signaling the corporation's steady expansion. Thus, TransWorld's appropriation of the frame constitutes a menacing presence. An excessive accumulation of objects and façades made out of a cluster of materials that brim over with dirt from Up Top link Up Top's shiny inflation of space with its 'backyard' Down Below and its protuberant waste. *Upside Down*'s mise-en-scène presents Down Below's lack of natural resources, which reinforces Up Top's depiction as an exploiter. Solanas' film even reflects the opposition between Up Top and Down Below in its visual rhetoric by employing a shot/(reverse and) inverted shot technique. Even though *Upside Down* presents a narrative setting with two juxtaposed worlds with different gravities, characters' "enunciatory operations" indicate that divisions are far from natural (Certeau 1984: 99). A 'pure'/'defiled' 'logic' articulates interactions between both worlds. Up Top discriminates by establishing a physical borderline, purified spaces, and etiquette to differentiate between two artificial social orders. Apart from discriminating between Up Top and Down Below, characters' presence in certain spaces and situations reveals that Up Top is also prejudiced against people who are old, female, non-Anglo, or have a low income. The central role of corporate capitalism in Up Top and the resemblance between Up Top's skyline and those in major U.S. cities equates Up Top with the United States. TransWorld's similarity to a maquiladora and the appearance of Spanish names and words invites to identify Down Below as Mexico. Yet, the film also includes, for example, Argentinian tango songs. Taking into account Solanas' Argentinian background and his denunciation of First World/Third World economic asymmetries in *Nordeste*, it can be surmised that Down Below stands for all Latin American countries: from Mexico to Argentina. In fact, Down Below seems to be modeled on the worn-out neighborhood in the Formosa province

(Argentina) that appears in Solanas' *Nordeste*. Moreover, death pervades the Latin America-U.S. borderland as the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border continues to spread. Authorities and gangs from different Latin American countries also assault people migrating northwards. In general, *Upside Down* reflects the paradox that as media, finance, and capital circulate more and more easily, authorities hamper people's attempts to find a job or come together with their loved ones. This dynamic summarizes with great accuracy the social consequences of the NAFTA agreements in the 1990s.

Mark Shiel's geographical approach to film and characters' spatial enunciations also serve to identify fractures in the system that divides Down Below and Up Top. *Upside Down* sometimes relies on a type of shot that turns 180 degrees in order to keep showing characters in an upright position when they cross from one planet to the other. These shots present the space between both planets as a continuum. In spite of the media's attempt to shape people's imagination in *Upside Down*, their perception and experience of spaces prove more powerful than propaganda. The presence of one planet on top of the other and the possibility of contacting people from the other planet at the Sage Mountains inspire characters' imaginations. This narrative setting establishes a fluid relationship between planets that leads people in both sides to be intrigued, sometimes even fascinated, by 'the other.' Other settings like TransWorld and Café Dos Mundos create artificial points of connection subject to Up Top's interests. Yet, this channel of exploitation, accidentally gives Down Below's inhabitants a chance to communicate with people Up Top and eventually subvert the system. In order to bring change about and be together, Eden and Adam have to endure the instability of their transnational relationship. Throughout the film, both characters jump onto swinging objects, appearing in unstable positions. Their liminal position allows them to draw from the most convenient sources, 'knead'

what both worlds offer, and create a new space where people from both worlds live side by side. Even though *Upside Down* presents a simplistic story of star-crossed lovers, its multi-layered mise-en-scène articulates a complex portrait of cross-border interactions. In addition, *Upside Down* points to the potential of transnational love stories. So far, few films, apart from *Like Crazy*, have moved beyond superficial depictions of transnational love dynamics. Yet, the increasingly common reality of transnational love is likely to inspire more such stories in the coming years. Adam and Eden's story serves Solanas' film to speculate on the possibilities of a world without borders, or at least, a world where borders do not divide the 'pure' and the 'defiled.' Despite celebrating a utopian society in the last shot, *Upside Down* leaves viewers to conjecture about this alternative world. Ultimately, a transnational/cosmopolitan sociopolitical consciousness—which is also present in Solanas' *Nordeste*—structures *Upside Down*. The film raises awareness of malfunctions in structures of social organization, evinces the unbalanced—and illogical—distribution of wealth, and presents transnational love's potential to advance transnational understanding. Eventually, *Upside Down* suggests that people need to interact and get to know each other better. When people respect and value the 'other' across the border, boundaries are more likely to fade, societies become more welcoming, and people can be happier.

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